

# North Central Kansas 2003 Severe Weather Review

After a quiet winter and early spring, the first occurrence of severe weather hit north central Kansas on April 29. Thunderstorms dropped hail to the size of golf balls, across much of the six county region. Funnel clouds were reported in Smith county. About a week later, scattered thunderstorms dropped penny to nickel size hail. Thunderstorms produced similar size hail on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

By far, the most significant event of May or June occurred on June 22 and 23. A large supercell thunderstorm stood firm just north of the Nebraska state line to the northeast of Mankato for several hours. Other thunderstorms developed across Jewell county and fed north toward the border. Yet more severe thunderstorms rumbled further west across Phillips, Smith and Osborne counties. The result was a multi-million dollar flood across Jewell county and several short lived, weak tornadoes in Phillips and Smith counties.

In Jewell county, severe damage occurred to county roads and bridges in the eastern part of the county. Nearly ten inches of rain fell at Lovewell Reservoir. Rapidly rising water forced the evacuation of a campground along the White Rock Creek downstream of the dam. Two men escaped serious injury after the road grader they were driving was swept off a bridge by the quick moving water. Further west, local law enforcement sighted at least three tornadoes across northeast Phillips and northwest Smith counties. No damage was reported. The remainder of June, July and August was mostly dry and very warm. One event on August 18<sup>th</sup> did produce strong winds across much of the area. In fact, winds were strong enough to topple a semi-tractor trailer south of Smith Center.

As the sun began to set on another summer season, Mother Nature had one more event in store for north central Kansas. Torrential rainfall the night of September 10 set the stage for widespread flooding across Mitchell county. Rainfall amounts of 6 to 12 inches were common across the county. Several tributaries of the Solomon River quickly went into flood as well as the Solomon itself. A man was swept away after a bridge collapsed on the Indian Creek west of Beloit. Fortunately, he escaped serious harm. South of Beloit, water was flowing over State Highway 14. In Beloit, the Solomon River Crested at 25.0 feet, or about 5 feet above flood stage. The flooding downstream to Simpson destroyed crops, bridges and county roads. On that same night, there were also several reports of large hail and damaging winds from the thunderstorms across Rooks, Smith and Osborne counties.

The year has come to a close on a quiet note, with sporadic rainfall and generally mild temperatures throughout the fall. The first snow of the season for most areas came the night of November 22 but didn't amount to much.

**Kansas Severe Weather Awareness Week**  
**March 15 - 19, 2003**